

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4549

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, SA, JO

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER RIFAI'S CONCERN WITH TAPLINE PROBLEM

REF: 75 AMMAN 10089, 75 STATE 305518

1. I CALLED ON ARAMCO PRESIDENT POWERS JANUARY 4 (EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO SEE POLICY-LEVEL OFFICIALS DURING HOLIDAY WEEKEND) TO DISCUSS PRIME MINISTER RIFAI'S CONCERNS OUTLINED IN AMMAN 10089. POWERS BROUGHT ARAMCO CHAIRMAN JUNGERS, WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE US, AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS MAJED ELASS INTO THE DISCUSSION.

2. POWERS AND JUNGERS BOTH EXPRESSED SURPRISE THAT THERE HAD BEEN A SHARP DECLINE IN THEIR DELIVERIES TO JORDAN DURING THE HOLIDAYS. THEY STRESSED THAT IT HAS NEVER BEEN TAPLINE OR ARAMCO POLICY TO REDUCE DELIVERIES TO JORDAN AS A NEGOTIATING OR PRESSURE TACTIC. THEY ASKED ME TO ASSURE YOU AND PRIMIN RIFAI THAT IF THERE WAS ANY REDUCTION, IT WAS DEFINITELY NOT DELIVERATE OR A NEGOTIATING TACTIC.

3. POWERS THEN TELEPHONED TAPLINE PRESIDENT FATE AND THE TAPLINE DISPATCHER TO OBTAIN ACTUAL DELIVERY FIGURES FOR THE PAST WEEK. THE TAPLINE OFFICIALS BOTH CONFIRMED THAT THER HAD BEEN NO INTENTIONAL SLOWDOWN OR MECHANICAL PROBLEM. THE DISPATCHER STATED, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WAS A DROP

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IN DELIVERIES TO JORDAN FOR SEVERAL DAYS, EITHER BECAUSE

JORDANIAN STORAGE FACILITIES WERE FULL, OR FOR SOME OPERATIONAL REASON THERE, AND DEFINITELY NOT BECAUSE OF TAPLINE INSTRUCTIONS. HE ADDED THAT THE AVERAGE DECEMBER DELIVERY FIGURE WAS 19 THOUSAND BARRELS PER DAY AND THAT TAPLINE HAS PROVIDED JORDAN WITH "EVERY-THING THEY ASKED FOR". THE DISPATCHER'S DAILY DELIVERY FIGURES, WHICH SHOW THE DROP FOR SEVERAL DAYS AND A SUBSEQUENT INCREASE TO MAKE UP FOR THE REDUCTION, ARE AS FOLLOWS:

DEC 17 18,000 BPD
DEC 28 16,000 BPD
DEC 29 10,000 BPD
DEC 30 14,000 BPD
DEC 31 6,000 BPD
JAN 1 25,000 BPD
JAN 2 23,000 BPD
JAN 3 22,000 BPD

4. THE ARAMCO OFFICIALS EMPHASIZED THAT FLUCTUATIONS SUCH AS THOSE SHOWN ABOVE ARE NOT UNUSUAL AND THAT THE IMPORTANT FIGURE TO LOOK AT IS THE AVERAGE WEEKLY OR PREFEREABLY MONTHLY DELIVERY. THEY WERE PARTICULARLY SURPRISED AT RIFAI'S EXPESSION OF CONCERN NOW, WHEN JORDANIANS HAVE JUST TURNED IN THEIR ANNUAL FORECAST OF REQUIREMENTS SHOWING A REDUCTION FROM LAST YEAR'S FORECAST OF 3,800 TONS (APPROX 26,500 BPD) TO 3,000 TONS (APPROX 21,000 BPD) DAILY.

5. POWERS EXPRESSED HOPE THAT IF PRIMIN RIFAI'S CONCERN NOT ALREADY ALLAYED BY EARLY JANUARY INCREASE IN DELIVERIES ARAMCO/TAPLINE EXPLANATION RELAYED THROUGH ME WOULD NOW SATISFY THE PRIMIN. IF QUESTIONS OR DOUBTS PERSIST, HOWEVER, POWERS STATED HE WOULD BE PLEASED TO INVESTIGATE MORE THOROUGHLY. HESALSO EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE NEGOTIATIONS AND COMMENTS ON THEIR CURRENT STATUS.
BUSHNELL

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